

i had just thrown up.
but i gave him a second chance.
and i didn't make fun of him or anything."

"that was wise," i say. "that's a good way
to lower the suicide rate."

"now you've made me feel guilty."

"it wasn't anybody's fault," i say;
"you were both young,

but if you do feel the need for a little expiation
my catholic upbringing will help me design a suitable
penance."

ADULT TRAUMATA

trying to explain to a general education class,
the primary process of literary pleasure,
i say, "wouldn't we all like, once in a while,
to regress to that age
when we were not even ourselves yet,
when we were one with the breast, with the mother,
and the mother was the world?
and wasn't it wonderfully easy to earn applause
at the potty-training stage,
when all we had to do was go to the bathroom
without missing the target
and our world would give us a standing ovation?"

they giggle; i giggle.

but they'll soon learn,
as they turn into teachers and interior designers,
that it's not that easy to impress
supervisors, deans, and other bosses,
especially where improval implies a pay increment,

and that to merit the appreciation
of a husband or wife of many years
they may have to literally kill themselves.

I WOULD HAVE TO SAY

that the alcoholics i have known
have been, as a group,
more creative than the joggers.